

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind met for their monthly meeting October 21, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium.

Mr. Fagan called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Mr. Fagan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Fagan called roll.

Present: Robert Fagan, Chair; Dr. John McAllister, Vice Chair; Cary Smith, Secretary; Jerry Belew, Board Member, Philip Powell, Board Member, Phillip Miller, Deaf Department Parent Rep, K. Nicole Walsh, ARDB Superintendent; Interpreters; Members of the community.

The next meeting will be November 18, 2025, in Woolly Auditorium on the Blind Department campus.

Public Comments:

LaHollis Hill: Mr. Hill said he was the ASDAA president. He said he would like to encourage the board members to take ASL classes that are offered at the school. This would show their support and allow them to have basic communication skills with the deaf community. He said he would provide them with a schedule of dates/time.

25-DB-57 Motion to Approve ARDB Meeting Minutes for September 16, 2025

Mrs. Smith made a motion to approve. Mr. Powell seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items:

25-DB-58 Motion to Approve Policy on Disbursement of Surplus Senior Class Trip Funds

Mrs. Walsh said if there are funds left over from the Senior class trip, they would like to have a policy in place to disburse funds equally between 9th – 12th grade classes.

Mr. Powell made a motion to approve. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion Items:

Representative for Wellness Committee: Mrs. Walsh said the Wellness Committee is a group of stakeholders who are involved and targeted toward improving the wellness of students/staff. They plan activities such as the annual Turkey Trot and Gobble Wobble. She said one person from the following groups needs to be designated to ensure compliance with the wellness policy and wellness committee requirements: school board member, administrator, food service worker, teacher, parents, professional groups, i.e. nurses and community members. She said the only one missing currently is a board member.

Mr. Fagan said the workshop held before the meeting was very successful and beneficial. He said they went over the testing scores, building project, and administration team leaders shared about their departments.

Superintendent Report:

- Building project updates – on schedule
- Celebrations: White Cane Day
- APH Conference – Lori Cole, Jena McDonnell and Nicole Walsh attended the conference in Louisville, KY. Financial cuts are being made that are affecting APH and will impact our students. She encouraged reaching out to Legislators. APH holds and disburses the federal quota funds for the United States which is funding that is sent out for every student that is blind or visually impaired. Those dollars go directly to our Instructional Resource Center. Mr. Powell asked if the funding had already been cut. Mrs. Walsh said that was her understanding. Dr. McAllister said there have been significant cuts in the field of blindness. He said there is a push to get rid of smaller programs. He said as a community we must be aware of what is happening and make as much noise as possible when they attempt to do this. That is the only way to stop it. Mrs. Walsh encouraged us to educate others. Mr. Fagan asked if she had talked to ADE or Secretary Oliva about this. Mrs. Walsh said she has a meeting with Secretary Oliva and will be discussing this issue. Dr. McAllister said it is important to know that have cut federal funds for individuals who work with individuals with disabilities. Mrs. Walsh said they have to start talking to students early about this as a career path.
- Fully staffed in Blind Department dorm
- Still need one nurse

Mrs. Walsh introduced Kurt Swartzlander, onboarding Executive Director of Operations and Stacy Swartzlander, Education Professional I.

Mr. Fagan reminded members of the next meeting, November 18, 2025.

Mr. Fagan asked for a motion to adjourn.

25-DB-59 Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Powell made a motion. Dr. McAllister seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Fagan adjourned the meeting.



Robert Eagan, Chair



John McAllister, Vice Chair